

Enough by nerdsarehot75

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Summary:

Maybe it hadn't worked out last time. Maybe this time it would.

Enough

Joyce was in the store, working, when she heard the commotion outside. She looked up from the shelf in front of her, looking at the congregation of people outside. They were all shouting, talking, pointing at something. It wasn't until she saw the flashing lights come zooming past that she thought to find out what was happening. She exited the shop, a box of mac and cheese still in her hands. One of the teenagers working with her had already been to see her friends, still huddled in a group with them. Rather than interrupt them she wandered over to Donald who was staring open mouthed at the road the lights had disappeared down.

"What's happened?" she asked.

"There's been an accident. Someone mentioned the chief," he said, still not looking at her.

Her stomach dropped. She heard the thump as she dropped the box. She took a few steps towards the road then turned abruptly, walking back into the store. She collected her bag and turned back out, marching over to Donald once more.

"I'm leaving early," she said, not bothering to wait around for a response.

She got into the car, slamming the door harder than was healthy in her haste and tore out onto the street, ignoring the yelling from a few pedestrians. She flew down the road, taking no notice of the speed limit.

She could feel her heart beating in her chest and could hear it in her ears. It was white noise as her thoughts tumbled and swirled through her head. Everything was clenched tightly and she was so tense in the seat she wasn't sure she'd ever relax again.

She pulled up to the hospital, jumping from the car, not even bothering to lock it. She ran through the doors, looking around for anyone familiar. When she couldn't find anyone she strode up to the front desk.

"I'm looking for Jim Hopper. He was just brought in," she said to woman sitting behind the desk.

"Are you family?" she asked, her bored expression so at odds with with the feelings in Joyce she took a step back.

"No," she replied before thinking about it.

"Then I can't anything," she said, her eyes already focusing on

something else.

"I swear to God," she began to say.

"Joyce," a voice called from behind her. Flo was standing there, Callahan behind her, wringing his hat in his hands.

"What happened?" She strode over to them.

"I dunno. I was in the car behind the Chief. We were chasing someone. I came around the corner and his car had rolled over in a ditch. There were a few gun holes and a lotta blood. I called an ambulance then went to get Flo. Have you heard anything?" Callahan asked.

"No, they won't let me know anything because I'm not family," she replied.

"That's ridiculous," Flo said, walking up to the desk. Joyce stood holding herself together with her arms, ignoring Callahan next to her. He was watching Flo while she argued with the woman at the front desk.

"Well, they still won't tell us anything. The best we can do is wait," Flo said, coming back over to them. She led them to a group of chairs and sat, glaring at the other two until they joined her.

The wait was excruciating. Callahan left to get coffee, then left for good a few hours in. Flo had held onto Joyce's hand. She'd been too weak to pull away, glad for the comfort. They sat in silence for those hours waiting for a word on Hopper.

Joyce was itching for a cigarette. She needed something to do other than just sit there. She craved the smoke filling her lungs and the nicotine calming her. She needed something other than this limbo of a waiting room.

Hopper had been on her about quitting. She'd teased him, after all, who was he to talk but even so, she had begun smoking less. He had too, she thought, but maybe that was just around her.

He also wasn't drunk dialling her as much anymore. That could be because he wasn't drinking as much or he just left the phone alone. She couldn't be sure but she hoped it was the former. She hoped desperately he was getting better.

She kept insisting he come over for dinner. At first it was just gratitude and ensuring he ate more than donuts. Then she remembered how easy it always was with him. How easy it was to slip back into their friendship.

After all the sacrifice he went through with Will it would have been an dick move to go back to their non-existence relationship. She

couldn't ignore him any more. He was a part of her broken collection of people she loved.

She'd loved him once, when they were just teenagers. After Lonnie, she was absolutely sure of that. It was as easy to see the difference between the feelings as it was between the men. Finding out she was pregnant and wishing it were Hop's; that was the clincher. She'd been young and stupid and had made all the wrong decisions.

Now he was back, and he'd had his heart broken more ways than she could comprehend, and she'd been left like garbage on the side of the road. Maybe it was fate, maybe that was a fool's dream. Maybe it was enough.

Her heart was beating double pace, waiting for something. The dread that filled her was more than she could take. She hadn't been to the hospital since Will left. She hadn't wanted to face it. She could only imagine what Hopper would feel if he woke up. When he woke up.

Had she meant to let him into her life so easily? Surely she should have put up a fight, put another wall around her heart before it turned into this. Every time she let someone in it ended in her heart being broken and she wasn't sure she'd survive if it happened again. Not after everything.

Flo stood from her chair and Joyce's head snapped up. A doctor had walked into the waiting room, a clipboard in hand. He was talking to the woman at reception, not bothering to look at the sorry collection of humans waiting for a word to alleviate or increase their suffering. Flo walked up to them.

"What has happened to Hopper?" she asked them.

"Jim Hopper?" the doctor asked.

"Is there another Hopper here? We've been waiting for hours," she said.

"He's in his room. You weren't told?" he asked.

"They're not family," the receptionist interjected.

"Ah. Well, he's out of surgery so I'm sure it's fine to see him. I don't think he's woken up yet though," he said, turning away.

"Surgery?" Joyce asked, her voice small. What if something went wrong? What if there already was something wrong?

"Just to remove the bullets, nothing to worry about," the doctor brushed off.

"Just tell us the room number," Flo demanded.

The receptionist told them and they hurried off, into the rabbit warren of the hospital, hallway after hallway going by. They came to a

stop outside his room, the door closed and lights off. Joyce reached a hand out and opened the door.

Hopper looked so small in the bed, not like the giant she'd come to know. It was like he wasn't himself anymore. Her heart stopped at the thought of last time it hadn't been the right body. When it wasn't real.

But that wasn't now, Hopper wasn't dead, and they'd left that chapter of their lives behind them. They would have no reason to do anything to them. She hoped.

She took a seat while Flo took one on the other side of the bed. They sat in silence, watching his chest rise and fall with each breath. His arm was in a cast and there was a bandage on his shoulder. His hand lay open on the bed and Joyce had to fight down the urge to hold it in her's.

She was used to him filling a room, not being diminished. Maybe she was just hyper aware of him but it was disconcerting to think this was the man she knew, lying there, so small and vulnerable. She knew he was broken but she never thought that meant he was breakable.

He was her saviour. Without him she would have lost Will and that was an outcome that was so unthinkable her entire body rejected it. She couldn't fathom what she would have done then. But he'd believed her when no one else had. And that meant something. He'd risked his life to help them and she'd never be able to repay such a debt.

It was more than that. He knew how to make her laugh, how to make her smile. He knew how to calm her down. Maybe he wasn't the best person in the world, and maybe he wasn't the best role model for her sons, but he was able to see her when no one else could. He didn't think she was crazy.

Somehow all the small things about him had swirled together in her mind and she realised she needed him in her life, and suspected he needed her too. After their walk in the Upside Down they'd latched onto one another, drawing comfort when there'd been none before. Maybe they didn't understand what the other had been through but they could sympathise. They could listen without judgement. No one else could do that.

Being with him reminded her of the hope she'd had when they were teenagers, when the world was still at their feet, before pain and sorrow had made itself known. It was nice to remember the lightness

rather than the burden. It made her feel lighter.

Was this what he did? Did he make her happier and lighter than she'd been in years? Even with all their damage? Was that possible?

Was that such a bad thing?

Hopper stirred in the bed, his eyes blinking open. Flo was immediately up, fussing about him while she sat, watching him with unblinking eyes. He was silent, allowing Flo to do as she needed. He turned his head to look at her and smiled. She smiled back, strained, but stood to be closer to him.

"What happened?" she asked, cutting across Flo.

He coughed and Flo produced a cup of water. He downed it in one, winching slightly with the movement of his arm.

"We got a call, something about an armed man harassing people on the street. When we checked it out he got into a car and sped off. We gave chase. I was in the lead. He shot at me, got me in the shoulder and the arm, and the leg I think. I lost control of the bronco. I guess I also broke my arm. I hit my head and blacked out" he said.

"You're going to be okay?" she asked. He nodded.

She hit him on the chest and the stomach, winding him. His breath left him in one long whoosh. Flo grabbed her arms and pulled her back from the bed.

"Are you nuts?" Flo asked, restraining her from the man in the bed.

"Flo, it's okay," he said. "How about you go get a coffee or something?"

"I'm not leaving her alone with you in this state," she said.

"I'll be fine." Flo released Joyce.

Joyce walked back over to the bed. Hopper smiled up at her and she hit him one more time.

"Don't you ever worry me like that again," she said.

"You were worried?" she asked, smirking at her.

"No, I waited for hours to tell you how much I didn't care." He ignored her sarcasm.

"I'm going to be fine Joyce."

"How dare you act like this was nothing? How dare you, Jim Hopper? You were shot!"

He took the blow she dealt him before catching her wrist with his one good hand. She was pulled off balance and braced herself on the bed, her hand falling on his leg. He hissed. She drew back, looking at where her hand had rested.

"Guess that answers that," he said.

"Fuck, Hop," she whispered before hugging him tightly. He put his arms around her, easily wrapping her up in him.

"Everything's going to be okay." He pressed a kiss to her head. She melted a little against him. She drew back slightly, resting her forehead against his.

"Don't scare me like this again," she requested.

"I'll try," he said. Her eyes fluttered closed.

Was this love?

Yes, yes it was. And maybe that would be enough this time.